

MUSIC FOR SOLO BASSOON AND BASSOON QUARTET BY
PULITZER PRIZE WINNERS: A GUIDE TO PERFORMANCE

Jason Walter Worzbyt, B.S., M.M.

Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

May 2002

APPROVED

Kathleen Reynolds, Major Professor
Eugene Migliaro Corporon, Minor Professor
James Gillespie, Committee Member
John Scott, Committee Member
James C. Scott, Dean of the College of Music
C. Neal Tate, Dean of the Robert B. Toulouse School of
Graduate Studies

Worzbyt, Jason Walter, Music for Solo Bassoon and Bassoon Quartet by Pulitzer Prize Winners: A Guide to Performance. Doctor of Musical Arts (Performance), May 2002, 52 pp., 28 examples, bibliography, 18 titles.

The Pulitzer Prize in Music has been associated with excellence in American composition since 1943, when it first honored William Schuman for his Secular Cantata No. 2: A Free Song. In the years that followed, this award has recognized America's most eminent composers, placing many of their works in the standard orchestral, chamber and solo repertoire. Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, Walter Piston and Elliott Carter are but a few of the composers who have been honored by this most prestigious award.

Several of these Pulitzer Prize-winning composers have made significant contributions to the solo and chamber music repertoires of the bassoon, an instrument that had a limited repertoire until the beginning of the twentieth century. The purpose of this project is to draw attention to the fact that America's most honored composers have enlarged and enriched the repertoire of the solo bassoon and bassoon quartet. The works that will be discussed in this document include: Quartettino for Four Bassoons (1939) – William Schuman, Three Inventions for Solo Bassoon (1962) – George Perle, Canzonetta (1962) – John Harbison, Metamorphoses for Bassoon Solo (1991) – Leslie Bassett and “How like pellucid statues, Daddy. Or like a . . . an engine” (1994) – John Corigliano. Each chapter will include a brief biography of the composer, a historical perspective of where that composition lies in relation to their other works, background information about the work, a formal analysis and suggestions for performance.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank the following individuals who made the completion of this degree possible:

- John, Jean and Janeen Worzbyt, for their continuous support, encouragement and love that has enabled me to accomplish a lifelong dream.
- Kathleen Reynolds, for her artistry, patience and understanding that has deeply changed who I am.
- Eugene Migliaro Corporon, for his musical integrity, intellect and support of all of my musical endeavors.
- Charles Veazey, John Scott, James Gillespie, Joseph Klein, Dennis Fisher, William Scharnberg, Mary Karen Clardy and Judy Fisher from the North Texas College of Music for their support, talents and friendship.
- David T. Borst, for introducing me to the bassoon and four wonderful years under his instruction at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
- Jack Stamp, for changing my life forever through his passion, dedication, generosity and friendship.
- Laurie Stamp, for her support, friendship, mentoring and expert editing skills.
- The faculty, staff and students at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, for their unending support, encouragement and friendship.

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CHAPTER 1

JOSEPH PULITZER (1847-1911) AND THE PULITZER PRIZES

Biography

Journalist, publisher, editor, politician and soldier are among the many professions that Joseph Pulitzer served in during his lifetime. He was a visionary in his approach to journalism and created innovations in the newspaper industry that still exist today. His legacy revolutionized the study of journalism, set standards of excellence for reporting, and created one of the most prestigious and coveted awards in this nation's history.

Joseph Pulitzer was born In Mako, Hungary in 1847. As a young man, he exhibited an early interest in adventure and fame. To this end, he attempted to join the Austrian Army but was rejected due to his weak eyesight and poor health. He then attempted to join Napoleon's Foreign Legion serving in Mexico and the British Army serving in India. In both of these cases, he was rejected due to his poor health. In 1864, he met a bounty recruiter for the US Union Army in Germany. He successfully enlisted in the Union army and served in the First New York Calvary during the Civil War from 1864 to 1865.¹

¹ Thinkquest.org, "Joseph Pulitzer"; available from <http://library.thinkquest.org/CO111500/spanamer/pulitzer.htm>; Internet; accessed 10 January 2002.

Following the Civil War he became a US citizen in 1867 and established residency in St. Louis, Missouri. St. Louis had a large German population which made him feel more comfortable in his surroundings. During that same year, he began to work for the Westliche Post, a German newspaper located in St. Louis. Over the next six years, he became the managing editor and part owner of the newspaper. He left the Westliche Post in 1873, selling his share of the newspaper back to the original owners for a \$30,000 profit.² During his tenure at the Westliche Post, he was elected to the Missouri House of Representatives. He also received a law degree and worked as a correspondent for the New York Sun.³

In 1878, Pulitzer purchased the St. Louis Evening Dispatch and the Evening Post, combining them to form the Post-Dispatch. He often used this paper to expose government corruption which resulted in high sales and a great deal of success.⁴

In 1883, Pulitzer retired from the Post-Dispatch and purchased the New York World for \$346,000. This became a major newspaper, eventually becoming the largest circulating paper in the United States. Under Pulitzer's leadership, the newspaper increased its circulation from 15,000 to 600,000 over a ten-year period.⁵ The paper became famous for its "sensationalism, exposes, careful and extensive reportage, crusades against corruption and a strong pro-labor editorial position."⁶ Pulitzer also

² Ibid.

³ Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia 2001, "Joseph Pulitzer"; available from <http://encarta.msn.com/find/print.asp?pg=8&ti=761571739&sc=0&pt=1>; Internet; accessed 10 January 2002.

⁴ Thinkquest.org.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia 2001.

added new sections to his newspaper, including sports pages, women's fashions sections, comic strips and illustrations. All of these innovations appear regularly in contemporary newspapers.⁷

Between 1896 and 1898, Pulitzer was in fierce competition for newspaper sales with the New York Morning Journal, owned by William Randolph Hearst. Both of these papers offered extensive coverage of the Spanish-American War and often used techniques to lure readers to buy their respective papers.⁸ These techniques, known as "yellow journalism" often included banner headlines, pictures and "emotional exploitation of the news."⁹ At the end of the war, Pulitzer abstained from this practice, choosing to focus on eliminating corruption in business and government.¹⁰

Towards the end of his life, Pulitzer suffered though serious health difficulties due to stress and overwork. He eventually became blind and an invalid, often taking solace on long cruises on his yacht. On October 29, 1911, he was found dead on his yacht in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina.¹¹ In his will, he left one million dollars for the creation of a school of journalism at Columbia University. The Columbia University School of Journalism was founded in 1912 and continues to be one of the finest in the nation. His will also provided money for the creation of prizes that would award

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Thinkquest.org.

⁹ Infoplease.com, "Joseph Pulitzer"; available from <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/people/A0840497.html>; Internet; accessed 10 January 2002.

¹⁰ Thinkquest.org.

¹¹ Ibid.

excellence in journalism and news reporting.¹² These prizes continue to promote and define excellence in the fields of journalism, reporting, criticism, cartooning, photography, poetry, prose, drama and music.¹³

The Pulitzer Prizes

In Joseph Pulitzer's will of 1904, he made provisions for the establishment of prizes to promote excellence in several fields. The original prizes were awarded in four categories: journalism (four awards), letters and drama (four awards), education (one award) and four traveling scholarships. The awards in letters were specifically for an American novel, an original American play performed in New York, a book on the history of the United States, an American biography and a history of public service by the press.¹⁴

Pulitzer was very aware of changes in society and to that end made provisions for changes in the types and number of awards. He created an advisory board that wielded significant strength in administering the awards. In creating this board, Pulitzer gave it,

power in its discretion to suspend or to change a subject or subjects, substituting, however, others in their places, if the in the judgment of the board such suspension, changes, or substitutions shall be conducive to the public good or rendered advisable by public necessities, or by reason of change of time.¹⁵

Since the awarding of the first prizes in 1917, the Pulitzer Prize board has expanded the number of awards to twenty-one, including poetry, music and photography. Beginning in

¹² Ibid.

¹³ The Pulitzer Prizes, "Joseph Pulitzer and the Pulitzer Prizes"; available from <http://www.pulitzer.org/History/history.html#bio>; Internet; accessed 18 October 2001.

¹⁴ Ibid.

1998, there was a significant change in the awarding of the Pulitzer Prize in Music. Prior to that time, the award was always given to composers of classical music. This category was broadened in 1998 to encompass a wider variety of music. Wynton Marsalis signaled the beginning of this trend when he was awarded the 1997 Pulitzer Prize for his Blood on the Fields, a work incorporating several jazz elements. Since that time, the Pulitzer Prize Board has given Special Awards to George Gershwin (1998) and Duke Ellington (1999) in honor of their achievements in jazz.¹⁶

The Pulitzer Prize in Music is “for [a] distinguished musical composition of significant dimension by an American that has had its first performance in the United States during the year.”¹⁷ A jury of four composers and one newspaper critic meet in New York to look at scores and listen to recordings. This process takes one year to complete due to the number of entries. During 2000, over 100 scores were submitted. Once the jury has reached its decision, the winner is announced in early April by the President of Columbia University. This ceremony takes place in the Pulitzer World Room in the Columbia University School of Journalism.¹⁸

In 1943, William Schuman became the first composer to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music for his Secular Cantata No. 2: A Free Song. Since that time, the Pulitzer Prize in Music has sought to recognize and promote excellence in American music. Such notable composers who have won this coveted award include Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, Charles Ives, Elliott Carter and Ned Rorem. As a result of these awards,

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

American music has been given the recognition and high regard that journalism, literature and dramatic arts have enjoyed in this country since the turn of the twentieth century. This promotion of American music has led the creation of other awards and fellowships that continue to recognize the continued efforts of composers to create a standard American repertoire. Institutions of higher learning all across the United States have dedicated themselves to the education and training of tomorrow's composers that will ensure the continued excellence of American composition.

This creation of an American repertoire within the past sixty years has had a significant effect on music written for the bassoon. Until the middle of the twentieth century, the overwhelming majority of the standard repertoire for the bassoon came from France and Germany. At the time of the awarding of the first Pulitzer Prize (1943), there were no solo bassoon compositions by American composers that were part of the standard repertoire. In fact, the only American work that bassoonists perform prior to 1943 is the Quartetino for Four Bassoons (1939) by William Schuman.

Starting in the 1940's, American repertoire for the bassoon began to grow rather rapidly. Composers such as Romeo Cascarino, Alec Wilder, Burrill Phillips, Willson Osborne and Alvin Etler created significant compositions that are now part of every bassoonist's standard repertoire. This interest in writing for the bassoon has continued to this day, resulting in a large and varied number of works by some of the finest composers in America.

¹⁸ Ibid.

The purpose of this document is to highlight the fact that compositions for the bassoon have been written by several Pulitzer Prize-winning composers. In doing so, they have created a body of works that warrant the study and performance from bassoonists in this country and abroad. These works also add to a repertoire that is not as large or as varied when compared to other orchestral instruments. Bassoonists have traditionally had the smallest number of works in their repertoire. These works substantially add to a growing list from the later half of the twentieth century. It is the hope of the author and other bassoonists in this country that American composers will continue to write music for the bassoon, a repertoire that has been overlooked and neglected for the past three hundred years.

CHAPTER 2

QUARTETTINO FOR FOUR BASSOONS (1939)

WILLIAM SCHUMAN (1910-1992)

Biography

The life of William Schuman encompassed nearly every facet of American music in the twentieth century. His contributions to composition, education and arts administration spanned the major portion of the twentieth century and have benefited several generations of musicians in this country and abroad.

Schuman's professional career began as an instructor and choral director at Sarah Lawrence College from 1935-45. During these years he studied composition with Roy Harris. In 1941, he was awarded the first New York Music Critics' Circle Award for his Symphony No. 3 (1941) and the first Pulitzer Prize in Music for his cantata, A Free Song (1943). As an instructor at Sarah Lawrence College, he began a new concept of arts education, "aimed at [the] student's self-discovery of the creative process".¹ In 1945 he accepted a position at G. Schirmer as director of publications. He served in this position for only two months, leaving G. Schirmer to become president of the Juilliard School.²

¹ Bruce Saylor, "William Schuman," The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, vol. 10, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001), 752.

² Ibid.

During William Schuman's tenure as president of the Juilliard School (1945-62), he enacted several changes and additions that established that institution as one of the world's finest. He brought together the Institute of Musical Art with the Juilliard Graduate School to form the Juilliard School of Music. Schuman founded the Juilliard String Quartet, which would set the standard for string quartets in residence across the country. He invited several noted composers to join the faculty, including William Bergsma, Richard Franko Goldman, Peter Menin, Norman Lloyd, Vincent Persichetti, Robert Starer, Robert Ward and Hugo Weisgall. Schuman also re-established the opera theater and created a dance division within the school. One of Schuman's most lasting contributions was his "Literature and Materials of Music" curriculum. Through this course of study, he brought together theory and history into one course with the repertoire as the basis for study.³

Following his tenure at the Juilliard School, Schuman became the president of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, serving in this role from 1962 to 1968. Many of the arts initiatives that he created are now regular programs at Lincoln Center. These include: the continued commissioning and performance of American music; creating the Lincoln Center Student program, which brings concerts directly to the schools and Young Person's Concerts given by the New York Philharmonic; the foundation of the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society and housing the Juilliard School at Lincoln Center.⁴

Schuman left the presidency of Lincoln Center in 1969 to devote himself to composition. He remained active as an arts advocate for the rest of his life, serving as an

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

advisor to several organizations, including the Koussevitzky Foundation, the Naumburg Foundation and the Charles Ives Society. He also served as chairman of the MacDowell Colony (1974-77, 1980-83) and as founding chairman of the Norlin Foundation (1975-85).

William Schuman's accolades as a composer are many and varied. His awards include: 28 honorary degrees, two consecutive Guggenheim fellowships (1939-41), membership in the National Institute of Arts and Letters (1946), the first Brandeis University Creative Arts Award in Music (1957), a Horbilt Award from the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Harvard University (1980), the Gold Medal from the Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (1982), a second Pulitzer Prize honoring his lifetime achievement as a composer (1985), the Gold Baton Award of the American Symphony Orchestra League (1985), the National Medal of Arts (1987) and the Kennedy Center Honors (1989).⁵

Historical Perspective

The Quartetino of 1939 was composed during the same year as the American Festival Overture, a work that would give Schuman his greatest success up to that time. The bassoon quartet was composed during his tenure at Sarah Lawrence College. It is not known if Schuman composed this work for a specific group of bassoon players. Schuman's only other chamber work utilizing a bassoon is his Dances (1984) for woodwind quintet and percussion.⁶

⁵ Saylor, 753-54.

⁶ Saylor, 754.

Formal Analysis

Movement I, Ostinato, begins with driving triplets in the third and fourth bassoon parts. These triplets overlap each other, alternating between the first four pitches of the G major and G Phrygian scale (example 1).



After a brief introduction, the first and second bassoon play in parallel major thirds in eighth notes against the triplets in the lower bassoon parts (example 2).



Measures thirteen through fifteen represent a transition to the next section with staggered ascending and descending G Mixolydian scales in the lower three bassoon parts. These three voices resolve on a D quintal triad, over which the first bassoon plays a descending E-flat major scale. Measures sixteen through twenty-four are identical in rhythmic material to the first twelve measures. The first and second bassoon parts play interlocking triplets that contain the first four pitches of the B-flat major and B-flat Phrygian scale. The third and fourth bassoon play eighth notes against the triplets, first in parallel octaves, then in parallel major thirds. Measures twenty-five through twenty-nine represent a transition to the final section. All four bassoon parts contain interlocking

triplets that resolve on a F quartal chord. The coda section (measures thirty through thirty-seven) begins with a F-sharp quartal chord approached by staggered triplet entrances separated by one beat in all four bassoon parts. This quartal chord is one half-step higher than the previous quartal chord at the end of the previous transition. This quartal chord resolves to a unison triplet statement by all four bassoons in parallel perfect fourths. The second half of the coda begins with staggered triplets in the third and fourth bassoon, containing the same pitches as in the first twelve measures. This material is subject to augmentation and octave displacement, creating a harmonic rhythm at half the speed as the beginning of the work. Superimposed over the third and fourth bassoon parts is a descending G Locrian scale (with a missing B-flat) in parallel octaves. All four voices end the movement on an octave G.

The second movement, Nocturne, begins with a brief ascending and descending passage in parallel octaves in first and second bassoons, representing the pitches of ascending F Lydian and descending F Aeolian scales. The first bassoon enters in measure three with a scalar passage in F Aeolian. In measure five, the third bassoon enters with an A-flat pedal tone, establishing the tonality of F minor. From measures six through ten, the lower three bassoon parts move by step creating several nontertian harmonies. These harmonies are (in order of their appearance): B-flat minor superimposed over F minor, D-flat major superimposed over a F minor nine chord, an E-flat quartal chord in third inversion and an E-flat quartal chord in second inversion. The second section (measures ten through fourteen) begins with a solo statement in the first bassoon joined by the third bassoon to form a perfect fifth pedal dyad (B-flat and E-flat).

In measures thirteen and fourteen, third and fourth bassoons move in parallel compound perfect fifths, generating several polychords: E-flat major/B-flat major, E-flat major/C major, E-flat major/D-flat major, E-flat major/C-flat major, E-flat major/B-flat major, E-flat major/G-flat major and E-flat major/A-flat major. The coda (measures fifteen through nineteen) begins with a solo statement in the second bassoon in F Aeolian, repeating the material first stated by the first bassoon in measures three through six. The remaining bassoon parts join the first bassoon in measures sixteen and seventeen, bringing the movement to a close on a F minor chord.

The Waltz begins with the first, second and third bassoons playing root position major triads in a pantriadic fashion centered around A-flat. These major triads are played with homogeneous rhythm producing the following major harmonies: A-flat, B-flat, C, B, E, F and G and A-flat (example 3).

The image shows a musical score for four bassoon staves, measures 13 through 19. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 120. The key signature has one flat (B-flat major/A-flat minor). The score is characterized by complex polychords in measures 13 and 14, where the third and fourth bassoons move in parallel compound perfect fifths. In measure 15, the second bassoon has a solo statement. Measures 16 and 17 conclude the movement with a final F minor chord. A rehearsal mark '5' is located in the top right corner, and a breath mark '(h)' is in the bottom right corner.



The fourth bassoon provides rhythmic drive to the upper three voices, eventually establishing a G pedal tone through the use of a G Aeolian scale with a hint of G Dorian in measure two. An A-flat major-major seven chord in third inversion established in measure ten brings the first section to a close. The second section (measures fifteen through twenty-four) is comprised of a duet in parallel major thirds between the first and second bassoon and an ostinato in the third and fourth bassoons establishing a tonal shift to E-flat major (example 4).





The final section (measures twenty-four through thirty-nine) begins with an exact repetition of measures one through ten. The upper three bassoon parts alternate between A-flat major root position triads and G-flat major triads in first inversion. The fourth bassoon part establishes a G pedal tone that extends to the end of the movement. The Waltz ends with three repetitions of an A-flat major-major seven chord in third inversion.

The Fughetta begins with the subject in the fourth bassoon (example 5).



The third bassoon enters with a real answer transposed up a perfect fifth in measure three. The first appearance of the countersubject is stated by the fourth bassoon in measure four (example 6).



The second bassoon repeats the subject in the original key one octave above the first statement. This is answered in the first bassoon by a real answer transposed up a major

third. Measure fifteen signals the end of the exposition with the arrival of an F minor triad. Measures sixteen through eighteen represent the use of the subject in stretto (example 7).



The second bassoon restates the subject in the original key in measure sixteen, followed by a tonal answer by the first bassoon. The third bassoon states the subject in the original key at the octave in measure seventeen, followed by the fourth bassoon in measure eighteen with the original fugue statement. All four voices converge on a C quintal chord (in third inversion) in measure twenty-five. Measures twenty-six through thirty-two represent the closing section of the movement, beginning with the subject presented in *durchbrochene arbeit* in measures twenty-six through twenty-eight (example 8).



The beginning of the statement is presented simultaneously in parallel perfect fourths in measure twenty-nine. A pedal C is established in all four bassoons through a series of staggered entrances, eventually ending the work on a unison G.

Performance Considerations

Individually, each individual movement of this quartet provides challenges to the performers. The Ostinato provides several rhythmic, intonation, and clarity issues. Much of the first movement places the ensemble in cross rhythmic relationships, duple against triple. The ostinato figure, shared among two instruments must sound like one instrument to effectively support the upper voices. Creating rhythmic clarity within this movement, and the entire quartet, is difficult as all four voices are used within a narrow tessitura with all timbres the same. To create this clarity, all four voices must clearly and cleanly articulate all tongued passages. Several of the octaves in this movement, particularly E-flat and D-flat, can be difficult to tune in the second and third octaves. The Nocturne has numerous examples of open fourths, fifths and octaves which can be difficult to tune due to the tessitura in which they are written. The Waltz requires three of the four voices to play with rhythmic precision, balanced against a fourth independent voice that must be heard with equal importance. The Fughetta presents balance problems between the fugue subject and the rest of the ensemble due to the fact that all four voices are within the same tessitura.

CHAPTER 3

THREE INVENTIONS FOR SOLO BASSOON (1962)

GEORGE PERLE (B. 1915)

Composer and author George Perle belongs to a select group of musicians that revolutionized the compositional process during the twentieth century. Equally noted as a dedicated teacher, his contributions to academia have led to a better understanding and appreciation of many twentieth century composers, most notably the music of Alban Berg.

George Perle was born in Bayonne, New Jersey on May 6, 1915. His earliest composition studies were with Wesley LaViolette (1934-38) and Ernst Krenek (early 1940's). In 1938 he completed studies at DePaul University (BA) and furthered his education at New York University, earning a Ph.D. in composition in 1956.¹ Beginning in 1949, he began a series of teaching positions that would take him to both coasts of the United States. These institutions included the University of Louisville (1949-57), University of California, Davis (1957-61) and Queens College, City University of New York (1961-84). In addition, he has served as a visiting professor at numerous universities throughout the country, including Yale University (1965-66), University of Southern California (summer of 1965), State University of New York, Buffalo (1971-72),

¹ Paul Lansky, "George Perle," The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, vol. 19, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001), 438.

University of Pennsylvania (1976, 1980), Columbia University (1979, 1983), University of California, Berkeley (Ernest Bloch Professor, 1989) and New York University (1994).²

Perle has served as composer in residence with several of this country's finest arts organizations, including the Tanglewood Music Center (1967, 1980, 1987), the Marlboro Music Festival (1993) and the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra (1989-91).³

As an author, Perle has made significant contributions in the fields of compositional technique, the understanding of twentieth-century music and the music of Alban Berg. Perle's book, Serial Composition and Atonality (1962), has become a standard music theory text.⁴ Other books that have received high praise include

Twelve-Tone Tonality (1977), The Listening Composer (1990) and

The Right Notes: Twenty-three Selected Essays on Twentieth-century Music (1995).⁵

Perhaps his greatest contributions as an author are the results of his analysis and research on the music of Alban Berg. Over the course of his career, he has published several books and articles that have contributed to a greater understanding of Berg's music, specifically his operatic works. Beginning in 1963, Perle published a series of articles proving that the incomplete act of Lulu could be completed based on existing material.

This led to a performance of the complete opera in 1985.⁶ His book, The Operas of Alban Berg (1980) won both the Otto Kinkeldey Award of the American Musicological

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Lansky, 440.

⁵ Sigma Alpha Iota Philanthropies, Inc., "George Perle"; available from <http://www.sai-national.org/phil/composers/gperle.html>; Internet; accessed 30 December 2001.

⁶ Lansky, 440.

Society and the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award in 1981.⁷ Perle's articles, "Webern's Twelve-Tone Sketches" and "The Secret Program of the Lyric Suite" won the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award in 1975 and 1978.⁸ His most recent text is his Style and Idea in the Lyric Suite of Alban Berg (1995).⁹

George Perle has received countless awards and honors throughout his career. In addition to his literary acknowledgements, he won the Pulitzer Prize in 1986 for his Wind Quintet No. 4. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1978 and the National Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1985. Additional honors include a MacArthur Fellowship (1986) and two Guggenheim Fellowships (1966, 1974).¹⁰

Historical Perspective

The Three Inventions for Solo Bassoon (1962) were written for bassoonist William Scribner. Between 1942 and 1965, Perle wrote several works for solo instruments, including works for viola, violoncello, string bass, violin, clarinet, flute and piano. Perle's other chamber works utilizing a bassoon are the four wind quintets (1959, 1960, 1967 and 1984) and his For Piano and Winds (1988).¹¹

Formal Analysis

The entirety of the Three Inventions is composed in a modified twelve-tone idiom that produces temporary tonal centers through the use of repeated pitches. Each movement is based on short motives that are repeated, joined together and transposed.

⁷ Ibid, 438.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Sigma Alpha Iota Philanthropies, Inc.

¹⁰ Lansky, 438.

¹¹ Ibid, 439-40.

The first movement is divided into three sections: measures one through eighteen, measures nineteen through thirty-four and measures thirty-five through forty-five. The movement begins and ends on low F, representing two of the ten low F's found in this movement. In the original manuscript, all of the low F's were performed as multiphonics. This is achieved by adding the adding the B-flat key to the normal low F fingering. The premiere was performed in this manner, but the multiphonics were removed prior to the work's publication.¹²

Within measures one through eighteen, two motives and a cadential sequence are introduced that reappear throughout the movement. The first motive appears in measures two through four, and is immediately repeated in measures six through ten in a transposed and embellished form (example 9).



Measures twelve and thirteen introduce the second motive that will be embellished and expanded in the second and third sections of the movement (example 10).

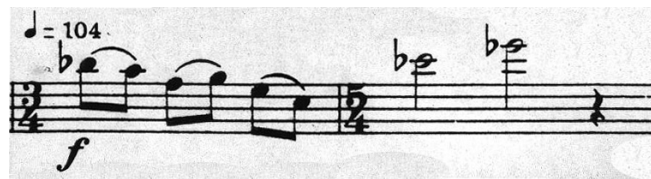


¹² William Davis, "Music for Solo Bassoon by Pulitzer Prize-Winning Composers," The Double Reed no. 24 (1996): 58.

A cadential sequence in measures fourteen through seventeen brings the first section to a close (example 11).



The second section (measures nineteen through thirty-four) includes one new motive and the repetition and expansion of previously stated material. Measures nineteen through twenty-three are an expansion of measures twelve and thirteen. The new motive, stated in measures twenty-four and twenty-five is immediately repeated and embellished in measures twenty-six and twenty-seven (example 12).



Measure twenty-eight is a repetition of measure seven and measure twenty-nine is a repetition of measure twenty-eight transposed down a major third. A transitional passage reestablishing F as a tonal center ends the second section.

The third section (measures thirty-five through forty-five) begins with a repetition of measures nineteen through twenty-three. The cadential sequence first stated in measures fourteen through seventeen is repeated in measures forty-two through forty-five. A final low F brings the first movement to a close.

The second movement is divided into three sections: measures one through seventeen, measures eighteen through thirty-eight and measures thirty-nine through

forty-six. The principal melodic material of the first section is found in measures one and two (example 13).



This material is repeated in various forms in measures four, eleven and fourteen. A descending figure found in measure twelve and repeated in measures fifteen and sixteen end the first section (example 14).

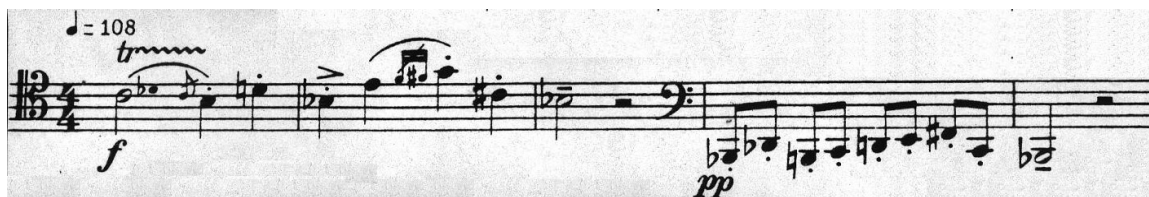


The second section consists of a motive in measures eighteen through twenty-one that is repeated, expanded and truncated in measures twenty-two through twenty-nine (example 15).



A syncopated transitional passage leads to the beginning of the third section. A perpetual motor of sixteenth notes comprises the entire third section. This section is based on the material in measures one, two, fifteen and sixteen.

The third movement begins with two brief passages separated by half rests (measures one through five – example 16).



This leads into a perpetual series of triplets in twelve-sixteen time (example 17).



Tonal centers are established through repeated pitches, most often on the second and third pitches of the triplet. These tonal centers include: A-flat (measures 6 through twenty-one), G (measures thirty-two through thirty-three), B-flat (measures forty through forty-one) and the return of A-flat (measures forty-nine through fifty-one). The unifying element of this movement is demonstrated in measures eighteen through fifty-one. The material in measures eighteen through thirty-four (beat two) is an exact repetition transposed up a half step in measures thirty-five through fifty-one. A final tritone figure in measures fifty-five and fifty-six resolves to an F, bringing the work to a close.

Performance Considerations

There are two primary challenges to performing this work. The first is the appearance of three high G's found in the first and second movement. As an alternative, Perle writes in an E as an ossia. All three of these pitches are surrounded on either side by rests, allowing performers to reset their embouchure. A suggested method for producing this pitch is to place the upper and lower teeth directly on the reed, using the left hand fingering of first finger and the A flick (vent) key. Additional techniques for approaching this pitch would include using a shorter bocal for the first and second

movements as well as using reed that favored playing in the upper tessitura. A reed having these characteristics might have a narrower shape, a shorter blade length, and a tube that was beveled higher towards the collar of the reed.

The second challenge this work presents is finding a place to breathe in the third movement. The only breath marks that are provided are before measure twenty-two and just before beat two of measure thirty-seven. The author recommends taking additional breaths after the first sixteenth note of measure sixteen, after the first sixteenth note of measure thirty-two and after the first sixteenth note of measure forty-nine. All three of these breaths take place after a resolution to a new tonal center, providing a non-intrusive transition to the next section. This movement contains one incorrect pitch in measure twenty-five. In order to preserve the transposition repetition of measures eighteen through thirty-four with thirty-five through fifty-one, the last pitch of measure twenty-five must be changed to C instead of C-sharp.

CHAPTER 4

CANZONETTA (1962)

JOHN HARBISON (B. 1938)

Biography

Composer, conductor, poet and arts educator John Harbison is the quintessential example of a modern-day renaissance man. He has composed for nearly every classical music genre from chamber, to symphonic, to opera with many of these works being critically acclaimed and entering the standard repertoire. As a conductor he has led ensembles specializing in the works of the seventeenth century through works of the present day. His talents as a lyricist have allowed him to assume dual roles as librettist and composer for his vocal and operatic works. Lastly, he has demonstrated deep commitment to the education of further generations of composers through his academic posts and his presence within the most prestigious artistic associations.

John Harbison was born in Orange, New Jersey on December 20, 1938. He was raised in an environment rich in intellectual and cultural opportunities that influenced his training as a composer. His earliest musical influences were Bach, Stravinsky and jazz: by the age of eleven he was playing in his own jazz band as a pianist. His fascination with the music of Bach has continued to be an influential voice in his compositions.

Harbison has written that the Bach cantatas were just as influential to him as the Beethoven string quartets are to other musicians.¹

Harbison began his formal composition training with Walter Piston at Harvard University, earning a BA in 1960 and receiving honors in composition and poetry. He completed additional studies with Boris Blacher in 1961 at the Berlin Musikhochschule, and with Roger Sessions and Earl Kim at Princeton University where he earned an MFA in 1963.²

The summer of 1963 proved to be very significant to Harbison. At the invitation of Roger Sessions, Harbison was invited to spend the summer at the Santa Fe Opera Company. During that summer, the complete operas of Stravinsky were performed in the presence of the composer. This time spent with Stravinsky furthered Harbison's fascination with the composer's works and had an impact on his compositional output.³

Harbison began his academic career in 1969 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In recognition of his success, he was named Class of 1949 Professor of Music (1984) and Killian Award Lecturer (1994).⁴ He was later awarded one of that institution's highest honors, Institute Professor, in 1996.⁵ For the past several summers,

¹ David St. George, "John Harbison," The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, vol. 10, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001), 841.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ G. Schirmer Composers, "John Harbison"; available from http://www.schirmer.com/composers/harbison_bio.html; Internet; accessed 30 December 2001.

⁵ St. George, 841.

he has been on the composition faculty at the Aspen Music School.⁶ His previous academic appointments include Boston University and CalArts University.⁷

Harbison has been composer in residence with several of the most prestigious ensembles in this country and abroad, including the Pittsburgh Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Tanglewood Music Festival, Marlboro Music Festival, Santa Fe Chamber Festival and the American Academy in Rome.⁸ His music has been commissioned by a diverse group of organizations, from professional orchestras to academic institutions, such as the Metropolitan Opera, Minnesota Orchestra, Chicago Chamber Musicians, Israeli Consulate of Chicago, College Band Directors National Association, American Composers Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Oregon Symphony, University of Wisconsin and many others.⁹

As a conductor, he has held the position of music director of several vocal and orchestra ensembles as well as serving as a guest conductor. From 1990 – 1992 he was the creative chair of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. In 1991 he conducted the Scottish Chamber Orchestra at the Ojai Festival. Other guest conducting appearances include the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony and the Handel and Haydn Society. He is former music director of the Cantata Singers in Boston and the Principal Guest Conductor of Emmanuel Music in Boston, an ensemble specializing in Bach cantatas and seventeenth-century motets as well as music of the present day.¹⁰

⁶ G. Schirmer Composers.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Harbison has been recognized for his achievements as a composer and educator from the most prestigious institutions. He has been awarded the Kennedy Center Friedheim Prize for his Piano Concerto (1980), the Pulitzer Prize for Music for his cantata The Flight Into Egypt (1987), a MacArthur Fellowship (1989), the Mary Biddle Duke Lecturer in Music at Duke University (1991), and the Heinz Award for the Arts and Humanities (1998).¹¹ In recognition of his encouragement of careers of younger composers, he has been named to the board of directors of the American Academy in Rome, Copland Fund, Koussevitzky Foundation and the American Academy of Arts and Letters.¹²

Harbison's compositions have become part of the standard repertory in almost every genre. His principal works are his three string quartets, three symphonies, the Piano Quintet (1981), the Wind Quintet (1979), the cantata The Flight Into Egypt (1987), and three operas, including The Great Gatsby (1999), commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera after F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel. He has also made significant contributions to the wind ensemble repertoire: Music for Eighteen Winds (1986), Three City Blocks (1991) and Olympic Dances (1996).¹³

Historical Perspective

The Canzonetta was written in 1962, placing it as the second published work in the composer's catalogue, following the Duo for Flute and Piano (1961). Harbison's

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

other chamber compositions utilizing the bassoon are the Quintet for Winds (1979) and the Trio Sonata (1994).¹⁴

Formal Analysis

The Canzonetta is a serial composition built upon the following tone row:

E-flat – A-flat – F – F-sharp – G – C – A – B-flat – D – C-sharp – E – B. From this row, the following matrix is used to derive the melodic material (example 18).

	I ₀	I ₅	I ₂	I ₃	I ₄	I ₉	I ₆	I ₇	I ₁₁	I ₁₀	I ₁	I ₈
P ₀	Eb	Ab	F	F#	G	C	A	Bb	D	C#	E	B R ₀
P ₇	Bb	Eb	C	C#	D	G	E	F	A	G#	B	F# R ₇
P ₁₀	Db	Gb	Eb	E	F	Bb	G	Ab	C	B	D	A R ₁₀
P ₉	C	F	D	Eb	E	A	F#	G	B	Bb	Db	Ab R ₉
P ₈	B	E	C#	D	D#	G#	F	F#	A#	A	C	G R ₈
P ₃	F#	B	G#	A	Bb	Eb	C	C#	F	E	G	D R ₃
P ₆	A	D	B	C	C#	F#	D#	E	G#	G	Bb	F R ₆
P ₅	Ab	Db	Bb	B	C	F	D	D#	G	F#	A	E R ₅
P ₁	E	A	F#	G	Ab	Db	Bb	B	D#	D	F	C R ₁
P ₂	F	Bb	G	Ab	A	D	B	C	E	D#	F#	C# R ₂
P ₁₁	D	G	E	F	F#	B	Ab	A	C#	C	Eb	Bb R ₁₁
P ₄	G	C	A	Bb	B	E	C#	D	F#	F	G#	D# R ₄
	R ₁₀	R ₁₅	R ₁₂	R ₁₃	R ₁₄	RI ₉	RI ₆	RI ₇	RI ₁₁	RI ₁₀	RI ₁	RI ₈

Harbison uses this matrix in several unorthodox methods to generate the principal melodic material for the composition. This work demonstrates the influence of Stravinsky through the use of tone rows of less than twelve notes. During Stravinsky's final composition period, he produced several serial compositions that did not adhere to

¹⁴ Ibid.

the strict rules of twelve-tone technique. An example of one of these works is In Memoriam Dylan Thomas (1957), in which the entire composition is based on a five-note tone row. Harbison uses a similar technique in the Canzonetta, employing rows that are four, seven and eight notes in length. Another technique that Harbison uses in this work is to combine tone rows of four notes each from three different twelve-tone rows generating a completely different twelve tone row not found within the matrix. This technique, for the purposes of this study, will be referred to as tetrachordal combinatoriality. A similar technique was frequently used by Schoenberg, combining two six-note rows from different tone rows to produce a completely different twelve-tone row called hexachordal combinatoriality. A possible insight into Harbison's method of combinatoriality can be found within the first four and last four intervals of the prime row. These intervals, perfect-fourth, minor-third and minor-second are a mirror image of one another when read side to side. This relationship might suggest why Harbison used several four-note rows in this composition. Harbison also creates new seven and eight-note tone rows by combining three and four-note rows that have been subjected to permutation. Finally, Harbison never uses a full statement of the prime row in this composition. Only the P_2 form of the row is used in its entirety.

The overall form of this composition is dictated by the changes in tempo and meter. Section A is from measures one through thirty-four; section B is from measures thirty-five through 73; section C is from measures seventy-four through ninety-two and a brief coda from measures ninety-three through ninety-six completes the work.

Throughout the Canzonetta, Harbison marks the principal melodic material with brackets,

indicating the beginning and ending of statements of the row. The following table will illustrate all statements of the row as indicated by the brackets.

<u>Measures</u>	<u>Bassoon Part</u>	<u>Source of Melodic Material</u>
2 – 4	I	Pitches 5 - 7 of RI_8 in permutation and 9 - 12 of RI_0 in permutation
2 – 4	III	Pitches 10 – 12 of RI_0 in permutation and 4 – 7 of RI_8 in permutation
9 – 12	I	Pitches 1 – 4 of R_1
11 – 13	IV	Pitches 1 – 4 of I_6
12 – 14	III	Pitches 1 – 4 of R_9
15 – 18	IV	Pitches 1 – 12 of P_2
18 – 20	III	Pitches 9 – 12 of P_9
20 – 24	IV	Pitches 1 – 4 of I_6 , 10 – 12 of I_8 in permutation and 8 – 11 of P_{10}
24 – 28	I	Pitches 3 – 6 of I_5 in permutation, 1 – 4 of P_7 and 5 – 8 of R_{10}
28 – 31	II	Pitches 9 – 12 of RI_{11} and 2 – 4 of I_0
34 – 38	I	Pitches 1 – 4 of P_9 , 1 – 4 of I_6 and 9 – 12 of P_9
39 – 42	I	Pitches 1 – 4 of I_7 , 1 – 4 of P_2 and 9 – 12 of RI_{11}
45 – 49	IV	Pitches 1 – 4 of P_9 , 1 – 4 of I_6 and 9 – 12 of P_9
51 – 52	I	Pitches 1 – 4 of I_{11} , 1 – 4 of R_6 and 9 – 12 of RI_{11}
52 – 54	IV	Pitches 1 – 4 of I_0 , 9 – 12 of I_0 and 1 – 4 of P_3 in permutation
53 – 55	II	Pitches 1 – 4 of P_{11} , 1 – 4 of I_8 , and 9 – 12 of P_{11}

55 – 56	III	Pitches 1 – 4 of P ₀ in permutation, 1 – 4 of I ₈ with permutation and 9 – 12 of I ₀
56 – 58	I	Pitches 2 – 4 of I ₁₁ , 1 – 4 of P ₂ and 9 – 12 of I ₁₁
63 – 68	III	Pitches 4 – 6, 10 of I ₅ , 7 – 10 of I ₁₀ in permutation and 3 – 6 of RI ₄ in permutation
63 – 68	IV	Pitches 3 – 6 of P ₀ in permutation, 6 – 9 of P ₁ in permutation and 7 – 9, 11 of I ₀ in permutation
79 – 86	III	Pitches 9 – 12 of P ₉

Performance Considerations

This work presents multiple challenges due to its complex rhythmic relationships among the four parts and the atonal basis of the melodic material. Much of the quartet places two or more parts in cross-rhythmic relationships, duple versus triple. In addition, there are several instances of complicated rhythms with ties across the bar lines creating challenges for achieving proper rhythmic relationships. There are numerous examples of rapid, wide leaps of two octaves or more, creating challenges for intonation and response. Many of these wide leaps take place within the space of a grace note. The atonal melodic presents unique technical challenges in that the overwhelming repertoire for bassoonists is in a tonal idiom. Due to its multiple challenges, this quartet has distinguished itself as one of the most difficult in the repertoire.

CHAPTER 5

METAMORPHOSES FOR BASSOON SOLO (1991)

LESLIE BASSETT (B. 1923)

Biography

Composer, theorist and educator Leslie Bassett has led a successful career that has spanned over four decades. Equally devoted to teaching and composition, he has left a legacy that will continue to influence future composers for years to come.

Leslie Bassett was born in Hanford, California on January 22, 1923. He began playing the piano at the age of five continuing with trombone studies as a high school student. Following graduation from high school, he enrolled at California State University at Fresno for several semesters. His education was interrupted by service in the military during the United State's involvement in World War II. For thirty-eight months he served as a trombonist in the Thirteenth Armored Division Band of the United States Army in California, Texas, France and Germany. It was during his military service that he began to arrange music for several concert and jazz bands. Following his military service, he completed his undergraduate degree in 1947 and enrolled at the University of Michigan for graduate study. He received his Masters and Doctoral degrees in Music Composition from the University of Michigan (1949, 1956) where his principal teacher was Ross Lee Finney. Bassett has said of his studies with Finney that

he was “the teacher to whom I owe the most.”¹ Bassett’s other teachers included Nadia Boulanger, Arthur Honegger, Roberto Gerhard and Mario Davidovsky.²

In 1952, Bassett joined the faculty at the University of Michigan. He was named the head of the composition department in 1970 and remained in that role until his retirement in 1991. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, he was a founder and member of the electronic composition studio and director of the Contemporary Directions Performance Project.³ During his career at the University of Michigan, he received countless awards in honor of his service to the university. These included the Albert A. Stanley Professorship, Senior Fellow of the Michigan Society of Fellows, the Henry Russel Lecturer Award, a Citation of Merit from the University of Michigan School of Music Alumni Society and the title of Distinguished Artist from the Michigan Council for the Arts.⁴ Additional awards include the Rome Prize, the Pulitzer Prize for Music (1966 – Variations for Orchestra), two Guggenheim Fellowships, the Naumburg Foundation Recording Award and a Fulbright Fellowship.⁵ He has served on the boards of the American Society of University Composers, the National Advisory of the American Composers Alliance and was elected a member of the Institute of the American Academy and the Institute of Arts and Letters in 1976.⁶

¹ Ellen S. Johnson, Leslie Bassett: A Bio-Bibliography (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), 1-2.

² Ibid, 2.

³ Edith Borroff and Michael Meckna, “Leslie Bassett,” The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, vol. 10, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001), 870.

⁴ Johnson, 3-6.

⁵ Borroff and Meckna, 870.

⁶ Johnson, 5-7.

Leslie Bassett's music has been commissioned by this country's most prestigious ensembles and organizations, including the National Endowment for the Arts, Philadelphia Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Koussevitsky Foundation and McKim Foundations in the Library of Congress, Cook Choral Festival and the Schoenberg Institute.⁷ In addition to his musical compositions, his text Manual of Sixteenth Century Counterpoint (1967) has become a standard work in the study of principles of modal counterpoint as observed in the music of Giovanni da Palestrina and Orlandus Lassus.⁸

Historical Perspective

Metamorphoses for solo bassoon was commissioned by friends, colleagues and former students of L. Hugh Cooper, Professor of Bassoon at the University of Michigan. The commission was made "on the occasion of his retirement and in appreciation of his many contributions to performance, teaching and research."⁹ The world premier was given by Gwendolyn Rose at the University of Michigan on February 12, 1991. Several subsequent performances were given by Richard Beene, who is currently Professor of Bassoon at the University of Michigan. Located at the back of the work are a series of suggested fingerings to assist the performer in negotiating some of the extended techniques found within selected movements. Bassett's other chamber works utilizing a bassoon are his Wind Quintet (1958), Nonet (1967) and his Wind Music (1975).¹⁰

Throughout his career, Bassett has made several contributions to the repertoires of

⁷ Sigma Alpha Iota Philanthropies, Inc., "Leslie Bassett"; available from <http://www.sai-national.org/phil/composers/lbassett.html>; Internet, accessed 30 December 2001.

⁸ Johnson, 4.

⁹ Leslie Bassett, Metamorphoses, (New York: C.F. Peters, 1992), 1.

¹⁰ Borroff and Meckna, 480.

chamber ensembles and the symphonic wind ensemble. His works for symphonic wind ensemble include: Designs, Images and Textures (1964), Sounds, Shapes and Symbols (1977), Concerto Grosso for Brass Quintet and Band (1982), Colors and Contours (1984), Lullaby for Kirsten (1985) and the Fantasy for Clarinet and Band (1986).¹¹

Formal Analysis

The Metamorphoses is divided into eight movements, each based on a prominent orchestral bassoon excerpt. Bassett provides the following program note to the work:

Each of the eight Metamorphoses emerges and unfolds from a brief source, a fragment drawn from orchestral bassoon literature. Tempos, pitches and rhythms may be substantially changed from the original, yet the sources remain clearly recognizable, giving rise to the new music which follows; homages rather than quotations.¹²

The first movement is based on the opening bassoon solo of Igor Stravinsky's Le Sacre du Printemps (example 19).



Bassett uses traditional notation throughout the work, however there are no bar lines used in this movement. Throughout this movement, there are several allusions to the opening solo, particularly the rhythm of two slurred thirty-second notes following a dotted note or rest. A gradual accelerando from quarter note equals fifty-eight to eighty-four provides constant momentum throughout. There are two instances of graphic

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Bassett, 1.

notation indicating a gradual accelerando. Both of these are located following a fermata, giving the impression of a quasi-cadenza (example 20).



Movement two is based on Serge Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf, Op. 67, where the bassoon portrays the role of the grandfather. As in the first movement, traditional notation is used without bar lines. The predominant rhythmic motive employed throughout the movement is an sixteenth note followed by a sixteenth rest and a sixteenth note, the opening rhythm of the bassoon solo (example 21).



The entirety of this movement is based on modified twelve-tone technique. Several twelve tone rows are stated throughout, but these rows are not related to one another within one matrix. The following chart shows these tone rows in order of their appearance.

- (1) B – F-sharp – A – B-flat – C-sharp – E – G-sharp – D – F – G – C – E-flat
- (2) F-sharp – C-sharp – B – G – F – D – C – A-flat – E – E-flat – B-flat – A
- (3) G – C-sharp – B – F-sharp – A-flat – F – D – C – A – E – E-flat – B-flat

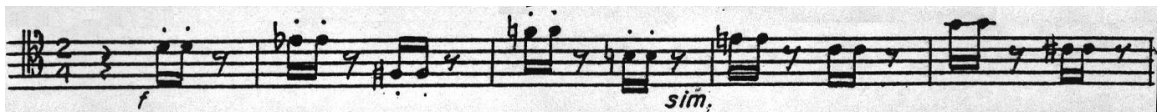
The movement ends with a triplet and a whole note under a fermata. This is the only statement of this rhythmic motive from the original bassoon solo.

The third movement is based on the closing bassoon solo from the second movement of Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony in F Minor, Op. 36 (example 22).



As with the previous two movements, traditional notation is used with no bar lines present. All pitch classes are used freely in this movement. In the final passage, Bassett requests the performer to play the final C as written and then create a timbral change to facilitate the diminuendo. This can be accomplished by the adding the left hand C flick (vent) key and the right hand low E key.

The fourth movement is based on the bassoon solo found within the fourth movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's Third Symphony in E-flat Major, Op. 55 (example 23).



This is the first movement in which Bassett uses a time signature in conjunction with traditional notation. Much of the movement is based on modified twelve-tone technique. There is one statement of a twelve tone row: D-flat – B-flat – A – C – B – F-sharp – F – A-flat – G – D – E – E-flat, followed by several examples of nine, ten, and eleven tone rows. In addition, several of the passages are treated to sequential development. A D to E-flat trill brings this movement to a close, which represents the two first pitches in the first measure.

Movement five is taken from the fourth movement of Beethoven's First Symphony in C Major, Op. 26 (example 24).



The majority of the melodic content is based on an octatonic scale. Two timbral trills are found within this movement. In measures eighteen and nineteen, trilling the right hand middle finger will produce a timbral trill on the sustained high B. In measures fifty-five through fifty-seven, the use of the F and G keys on the boot joint will produce the timbral trill on D.

The sixth movement is based on the bassoon passage found in the third movement of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony in F Major, Op. 93 (example 25).



Almost the entire movement is based on groups of two to three eighth notes a minor second or a major second apart, producing the effect of creating several synthetic scales. The movement ends on an acoustic scale with the addition of an F natural.

Movement seven is based on Alexander Scriabin's Poem of Ecstasy, Op. 67. Quotations from the work are separated with tremolos covering the intervals of a second or a third. There are numerous instructions provided for the performance of this movement. Chief among these instructions is to place a small cloth inside the bell of the

Two complete twelve-tone rows are found in the final passage of the movement, written in graphic notation to indicate a general accelerando. These rows are: E – F-sharp – A-sharp – B – G – G-sharp – C – A – C-sharp – D – B-flat – (C) – E-flat and E – F-sharp – A – A-flat – B-flat – D-flat – C – D – E-flat – B – (E) – F – G.

Performance Considerations

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prolation of the pulse switches rapidly back and forth between duple and triple. In movement five, the use of the octatonic scale combined with the rapid tempo presents several technical challenges. Many of the tremolos in movement seven require the right hand to play flick keys on the tenor joint, creating challenges of balancing the instrument so that the left hand will not slip out of position.

CHAPTER 6

“HOW LIKE PELLUCID STATUES, DADDY. OR LIKE A . . . AN ENGINE” FOR FOUR BASSOONS (1994)

JOHN CORIGLIANO (B. 1938)

Biography

The music of John Corigliano encompasses the genres of opera, orchestral, chamber and film music with equal skill and success. The 2001 Pulitzer Prize for his Symphony No. 2 adds to an ever-growing list of accomplishments for one of America's most honored composers.

As a young child Corigliano was constantly exposed to music through both of his parents. His father, John Corigliano, was concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic from 1943 to 1966 and his mother is an accomplished pianist.¹ His formal training in composition came from Columbia University (BA 1959), where he studied with Otto Luening.² Following his studies at Columbia, he worked as a music programmer for the New York Times radio station WQXR and was music director for WBAI (Adamo 466). In addition to his work in radio, Corigliano served as a recording producer for Columbia Masterworks (1972-73) and assisted Leonard Bernstein with the Young People's Concert Series for CBS (1961-72). He first came to prominence after winning the chamber

¹ G. Schirmer Composers, “John Corigliano”; available from http://www.schirmer.com/composers/corigliano_bio.html; Internet; accessed 23 December 2001.

² Mark Adamo, “John Corigliano,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 10, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001), 466.

music prize at the 1964 Spoleto Festival for his Sonata for Violin and Piano.³

Throughout his career, Corigliano has been active as a teacher. He has served on the faculty at the Manhattan School of Music (1971-86), the Juilliard School (1992 -), and Lehman College CUNY (1973 -), where he was named distinguished professor in 1984.⁴

Throughout his career, his music has been honored by the most prestigious governing bodies in the music and film industry. He has been awarded grants from Meet the Composer, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation.⁵ From 1987-90, he had the honor of being the first composer in residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.⁶ His Symphony No. 1, a response to the AIDS epidemic, won the 1991 Grawemeyer Award for the Best New Orchestra Composition. The Chicago Symphony recording of this work won 1991 Grammy Awards for Best Contemporary Composition and Best Orchestral Performance. In 1991, Corigliano was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.⁷ The National Symphony recording of his Symphony No. 1 and his Of Rage and Remembrance was awarded a Grammy for Best Orchestral Performance. In 1999 his opera, The Ghosts of Versailles, was awarded the Composition of the Year Award from the first International Classic Music Awards. This work was also awarded the Composition of the Year Award from the International Music Awards in 1992. His score to the film, The Red Violin (1997),

³ G. Schirmer Composers.

⁴ Adamo, 466.

⁵ G. Schirmer Composers.

⁶ Adamo, 466.

⁷ Ibid.

won an 2000 Academy Award, the Canadian Genie Award for best film score, the Quebec Jeutra Award and the German Critics' Prize.⁸

Corigliano has been commissioned by several of the most prestigious arts organizations in the country. These commissions include the New York Philharmonic (Concerto for Clarinet, Fantasia on an Ostinato), the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (Poem in October, String Quartet), the New York State Council on the Arts (Concerto for Oboe), flutist James Galway (Pied Piper Fantasy) and the Boston Symphony Orchestra (Promenade Overture). As a result of these commissions, many of his works have entered the standard orchestral repertoire. Corigliano was awarded the 2001 Pulitzer Prize in Music for his Symphony No. 2, which was premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in November of 2000 under the direction of Seiji Ozawa.⁹

Historical Perspective

John Corigliano's bassoon quartet, "How like pellucid statues, Daddy. Or like a . . . an engine." was completed in 1994 as the result of a commission from WNYC-FM, one of New York City's most prominent classical radio stations.¹⁰ This quartet represents Corigliano's only chamber work utilizing the bassoon. To commemorate its fiftieth year on the air, WYNC-FM commissioned several composers to set music to the poem, "No Longer Clear" by John Ashbury (b. 1927), winner of a Pulitzer Prize in poetry:

It is true that I can no longer remember very well
the time when we first began to know each other.
However, I do remember very well

⁸ G. Schirmer Composers.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ James A. Grimes, "John Corigliano's Bassoon Quartet," The Double Reed vol. 22, no. 3 (1999): 81.

the first time we met. You walked in sunlight,
holding a daisy. You said, “Children make unreliable witnesses.”

Now, so long after that time,
I kept the spirit of it throbbing still.
The ideas are still the same, and they expand
to fill vast, antique cubes.

My daughter was reading one just the other day,
She said, “How like pellucid statues, Daddy. Or like a . . . an engine.”

In this house of blues the cold creeps stealthily upon us.
I do not dare to do what I fantasize doing.
With the time the blue congeals into roomlike purple
that takes the shape of alcoves, landings . . .
Everything is like something else,
I should have waited before I learned this.

In his preface to the bassoon quartet, Corigliano writes the following:

In reading John Ashbury’s poem, “No Longer Very Clear,” I was struck by the imagery in the adjacent phrases “How like pellucid statues, Daddy. Or like a . . . an engine.” The frozen translucent statues seemed to me to be a marvelous foil for the pulsating hot energy of an engine – both images, as seen through the eyes of a child, readily evoked musical ideas.

The unique sound of double reeds seemed at once to be the right choice, And fulfilled a desire I have always had to write for multiple bassoons. The work utilizes row techniques, and is in two parts – the first a picture of the frozen pellucid statues, and the second, an aural portrait of the energy and acceleration inherent in the words “an engine.”¹¹

Formal Analysis

As stated by the composer, this work is divided into two parts, measures one through forty and measures forty-one through forty-eight. Both sections are based on two tone rows stated within the first four measures. These tone rows are examples of non-

¹¹ John Corigliano, “How like pellucid statues, Daddy, Or like . . . an engine,” quartet for four bassoons (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc.), 1.

dodecaphonic serialism in that they are not built on a twelve-tone row. The first tone row is found in the first measure, stated in all four voices as a grace note: F-sharp – G – A-flat – (G) – F – E-flat. The second row is stated in measure four in the first bassoon: B-flat – E-flat – B – G-sharp. Both tone rows are subject to a variety of permutations throughout the work, including cellular organizational techniques such as transposition and fragmentation.

The first section of A (measures one through forty) is represented by measures one through eight. Staggered statements by all four parts of F-sharp lead to a unison statement of the first tone row in measure one (example 27).



The third and fourth sections of the first measure present the first tone row as a transposed fragment in the third and fourth bassoon parts. The first tone row is repeated by the first bassoon without the F and E-flat in measure two. The first statement of the second tone row is found in measure four, stated by the first bassoon (example 28).



Measures four through eight represent the first occurrence of both tone rows existing simultaneously. The second tone row is stated three times by the first bassoon in its original form, as a transposed fragment and its original form. This is accompanied by transposed fragments of the first tone row in the three lower bassoon parts.

The second section of A extends from measures nine through forty. From measures nine through twenty-eight, the second tone row is presented in transposed fragmentation in the upper three parts, accompanied by the first tone row in fragmentation and transposed fragmentation in the fourth bassoon. A canonic statement of the second tone row can be found in measures twenty-two through twenty-eight in the second and third bassoon parts. The second tone row is presented in all four parts in transposed fragmentation in measures twenty-nine through thirty-three. From measures thirty-four through thirty-seven, the first tone row is presented in fragmentation and transposed fragmentation in all four parts. Measures thirty-eight through forty bring the first section to a close with a unison rhythmic statement in all four parts. The thematic material for this cadential statement is taken largely in part from measure two, with the addition of a new part in the second bassoon.

Measures forty-one through forty-eight represent the concluding section of the quartet. The entirety of measure forty-one is a cadenza for all four parts. This cadenza is written in free time, in that there are no specific indications given for a tempo. Each bassoon enters individually beginning with the fourth bassoon, playing rhythms of eighth notes and unmeasured note heads. The thematic material for each bassoon part is derived from both tone rows that have served as the basis for the work. The first and second bassoon parts are derived from the first tone row and the third and fourth bassoon parts are derived from the second tone row. The composer provides specific instructions for the execution of this cadenza. All players are to begin at a soft dynamic level, playing their figures short and separated but not coordinated with any other part. After all four

parts have entered, the players are to gradually crescendo and accelerate, so that they are playing as fast and as loud as possible in unison rhythm.

Measures forty-two through forty-four present the second tone row in the first bassoon accompanied by the first tone row in the lower three bassoon parts in an unison rhythmic passage. A statement of the first tone row from measures forty-six through forty-eight in the first bassoon brings the work to a close. This is accompanied by the lower three parts playing pitches found within boxes beneath the first bassoon. Each of these boxes include specified major thirds (C –E, G-flat – B-flat, E-flat – G) in which the players are to play any pitch within the range of that major third with random rhythms. The players are not to coordinate themselves moving from box to box and are to crescendo as much as possible. The work ends on unison C and B-flat thirty-second notes.

Performance Considerations

The primary challenge of performing this quartet is achieving rhythmic precision to bring out all of the complex rhythmic and tonal relationships found within this work. To aid the performers, measures one, two and forty-one are printed in full score in all of the individual parts. These contain perhaps the most difficult portions of the work to coordinate without a conductor. However, measures one and two provide multiple challenges to the performers in spite of the full score provided. Chief among these challenges is performing the grace note figure containing the first full statement of the tone row in measure one as an aurally perceivable melodic structure. The coordination of the grace note figure in measure two is also challenging, particularly the second bassoon

part which is more technically challenging than the lower two parts. The passage from measures thirty-four through thirty-seven must be played with absolute rhythmic precision if the staggered entrances of the first tone row are to be heard in the correct places. The primary challenge to achieving this is that each entrance of the tone row uses a different prolation of the beat. The coordination of the unison rhythmic passage in measures thirty-eight through thirty-nine is challenging as the borrowed subdivisions of the beat alternate between asymmetric and compound duple. The full score of measure forty-one aids the performers in terms of how and when to play, but does not aid in unifying these rhythms for the final unison statement at the end. One of the performers will have to assume the role of a conductor in leading the release of this figure. In measures forty-five through forty-seven, Corigliano instructs the performers that they should not coordinate their movements from block to block and that they should arrive at the downbeat of measure forty-eight together. However, the first bassoon part is not printed in the other three parts, making this transition difficult. The first bassoon will have to conduct the beginning of bar forty-eight to assist in the release of that passage.

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